



# THE ARKANSAS POST GAZETTE.

NEWSLETTER OF ARKANSAS POST NATIONAL MEMORIAL, GILLETT, ARKANSAS

Winter 2002-2003



Volume 3, Issue 2

## 3rd Annual Colonial Arkansas Encampment

February 22nd and 23rd, Arkansas Post and the Early Arkansas Reenactors Association will host the annual Colonial Arkansas Encampment. Reenactors and living historians from more than three states will converge on the park to return to the era of French Marines, Spanish Commandants, and hunters living on the Arkansas River from 1686 to 1804. The encampment will be one of the first events in Arkansas tied to the Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial, and interest has been high in the event.

Camps of French and Spanish soldiers and civilians will be set up for visitors to explore. Craft demonstrators and traders will be present to display the types of items that might have been traded here two hundred years ago. Saturday will include flint-lock musket demonstrations and programs exploring different aspects of this era in the history of Arkansas Post, including a discussion of piracy on the Arkansas River (see related story, this page).

We hope you join us for this exciting event!



### ARRGH!

#### Pirates on the Arkansas River?

When one usually thinks of pirates, the first thing to come to mind are images of the Caribbean and old Errol Flynn movies. The idea of pirates on the Arkansas seems incredible, but both the French and Spanish governments struggled to contain attacks on river convoys and hunters throughout the Colonial era.

As the way station between the colonial capital of Louisiana at New Orleans and the Illinois River settlements (later St. Louis), the Post served as a vital strategic and economic role in both French and Spanish administrations. The valuable nature of goods traveling up and down the Arkansas and Mississippi rivers led to persistent harassment of hunters, trappers, and convoys traveling the region.

At 1:30 p.m., Saturday February 22, Park Ranger Eric Leonard will present a program as part of the Colonial Arkansas Encampment, covering the topic of piracy on the Arkansas River. Come to learn more about Arkansas River brigands such as Brindamur, Blommart and others.



Flagraising: reenactors salute the French and Spanish flags during the 2001 encampment

# Superintendent's Scribblin's



We are living in such turbulent times that I sometimes find myself struggling to maintain a focus. With our nation on the brink of war on two different fronts, the stock market dropping, the shaky economic picture, the events of 9/11 and most recently the Columbia disaster, I cannot help but think, "What next?" I feel like trying to escape to some utopia where there is a rest from the nearly constant barrage of bad news. I am sure that I am not alone in these feelings.

But the truth is we have an escape, if only we realize it before it is too late. Our National Park sites offer a respite and Arkansas Post is no exception. It pleases me to see cars driving slowly along park roads hoping to catch a glimpse of the numerous deer, armadillos, alligators, birds and small animals. Arkansas Post was established to memorialize the history of our country from before 1686 on through 1863; some would argue that it extends further to the present day. But, whatever school of thought you follow, the park is actually more than history. Much of the 700+ acres of the park are forest, swamp and grasslands. It has been removed from commercial development to serve as a "green space" for people to find their own peace. Some will find the historical aspects intriguing and engaging, while others will savor the wildlife and the opportunity to commune with nature. Now is a time when both serve as a necessary diversion.

I am one of the very few that have the privilege of both working and living in a National Park area. Friends have asked me why I haven't pursued a more lucrative profession and when the bills come in, I find myself asking the same question. Then I reflect on the fact that I have been entrusted to assure that the park is preserved and perpetuated for this and future generations and money doesn't seem nearly as important to me anymore. There are still a large percentage of National Park Service (NPS) employees who feel the same way. Can you imagine our frustration when we read in the Los Angeles Times recently that 70% of the employees of the NPS may be replaced by contracts with private (commercial) companies? Efficiency and reduced cost are being touted and even though the NPS Director quickly sent an email to all employees stating that the article was in error, the NPS is being directed to enter into contracts wherever possible. There is a strong esprit de corps in the NPS and although it has been eroded somewhat over recent years, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to find companies whose existence is dependent on the bottom line, to hold the same reverence for National Park resources. Esprit de corps does not show on the bottom line but it sure makes a difference to our visitors.

As the cost of increasing our homeland security and strengthening our military leads to deficit spending, do not let our leaders forget how important our National Park sites are to every citizen. As budget cuts become a fact of life, do not let them take away our opportunity for escape – our National Parks. To keep what we have, it will be necessary for us to increase our support for these important places by volunteering our energy, donating our funds and most importantly sharing our understanding of their relevance to our well being. I genuinely hope that years from now our children will still have the opportunity to experience National Parks that serve as respites from their daily turmoil. I do not want to imagine a nation without them. Do you?

*Edward E. Wood, Jr.*

# National Parks and the Louisiana Purchase

*Arkansas Post is only one of a large number of National Park sites with connections to the Louisiana Purchase. During this bicentennial year we have highlighted some of the other parks and how they relate to the Louisiana Purchase. In this issue, we explore parks in the lower portion of the Purchase, in the states of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri.*

## **Louisiana**

### **Jean Lafitte National Historic Park & Preserve**

Two of the units of this park directly tie into the Louisiana Purchase. The French Quarter Visitor Center serves as a hub for the park, and commemorates the diverse populations that coexisted in New Orleans, giving it a distinct character which remains today. The Chalmette Battlefield preserves the site of the 1815 Battle of New Orleans where Andrew Jackson's victory over the British army secured Louisiana for the United States, and helped to propel Jackson to the presidency.



## **Arkansas**

### **Fort Smith National Historic Site**

Established by US Army troops on Christmas day 1817, Fort Smith was one of the earliest American forts in the Purchase Territory. A military outpost for over fifty years, the site was also home to a post-Civil War Federal Court exercising jurisdiction over present day Oklahoma. The park commemorates the unintended consequences of the Purchase through the policy of Federal Indian Removal, and its effects on the tribes relocated to the Indian Territory.

### **Hot Springs National Park**

Frequented by American Indians for thousands of years and documented by the Dunbar- Hunter expedition following the Louisiana Purchase, Hot Springs was deemed so important a resource that Congress established a reservation protecting the Springs in 1832.

## **Missouri**

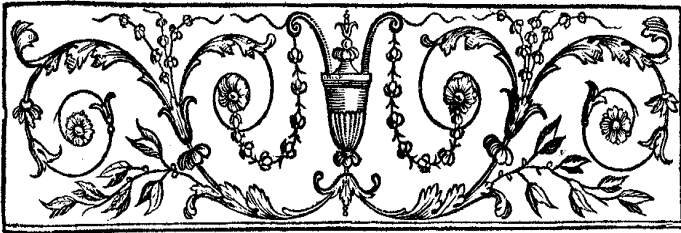
### **Jefferson National Expansion Memorial**

Located in St. Louis, considered the 'Gateway to the West,' the park commemorates Westward expansion topics, events, and persons including the Louisiana Purchase, President Jefferson, and the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The 630-foot high stainless steel arch, designed by Eero Saarinen, symbolizes the opening of the West following the Louisiana Purchase.



# Staff Notes

- ♣Ed spent three months as acting Superintendent at Lincoln Home National Historic Site in Springfield Illinois.
- ♣Park Guide Steve Edwards left the park in late November to join the Law Enforcement intake program; he should complete his training at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in March. We wish him good luck in his training and future endeavours.



## **HOT OFF THE PRESS**

From the pages of *The Arkansas Gazette*.  
Saturday, February 17, 1821

Dr. Bradford, of the U.S. Army, arrived at this place on Saturday morning last, from Fort Smith, on the Arkansas river, and after stopping a few hours, proceeded on his way to Tennessee.

We learn by Dr. B. that Governor Miller is on his return to this place, having failed in his endeavors to quell the difficulties which have for some time existed between the Cherokee and Osage Indians. A majority of the former have uniformly manifested an anxiety for a war with the Osages; and the young men of the latter refused to come to the Council, and actually committed several acts of hostility against the Cherokees, whilst Gov. Miller was in the Osage nation, endeavoring to put a stop to the war.

## **Archeology Month programs**

Arkansas Archeology Month, sponsored by the Arkansas Archeological Survey, is an annual celebration to commemorate Arkansas's cultural heritage as revealed through archeology. Coinciding with the statewide commemoration of the bicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase, this year's theme for Archeology Month is "Archeology and the Louisiana Purchase." At the time of the Louisiana Purchase, Arkansas Post was the only permanent European settlement in what would become the state of Arkansas. The community had served as a military waypoint for the French and Spanish colonies here, as well as a major center of the fur trade.

Throughout the month of March, a special exhibit entitled, "The Archeology of Bright's Trading House & Montgomery's Tavern" will be on display in the visitor center. This exhibit will include photographs and artifacts from the archeological explorations of the site of Bright's Trading House and Montgomery's Tavern. Artifacts will illustrate life and industry in Arkansas during the years immediately following the Louisiana Purchase. The Territorial Legislature met for the first time in Montgomery's Tavern in 1819 and John Audubon stayed there in 1822. The National Park Service and the Arkansas Archeological Survey conducted a dig at the site in 1971.

On Saturday, March 8, 2003, programs dealing with the fur trade, and its importance to Arkansas Post in honor of Arkansas Archeology Month will take place in the visitor center.

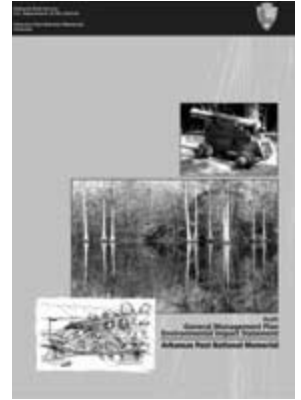
2:00 p.m. – The Arkansas fur trade factory, 1805-1810. Following the Louisiana Purchase, the U.S. Government established a fur trading factory at Arkansas Post in 1805. Intended to stimulate a positive relationship with the Quapaw and other Native American Groups, the trading post was a financial failure, and lasted only five years. Learn about this fascinating aspect of Arkansas Post's history in a talk led by Park Ranger Eric Leonard.

3:30 p.m. – Children's Fur Trade activity. Discover why the fur trade brought hunters, traders and trappers to Arkansas. Learn why fur was considered a valuable item and the different ways in which people used it. The use of furs to make hats and other items through felting will be explored in a hands-on activity. This activity is intended for children ages 5 and up. All supplies are provided. Space is limited to 25; therefore reservations are required and may be made by calling the park at 870-548-2207.

## General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement Draft for Arkansas Post National Memorial released for Public Comments

The latest draft plan for Arkansas Post National Memorial has been released. The plan for the park will be implemented during the next ten to fifteen years and anyone who would like to review it may request a copy from the park.

The Draft General Management Plan with an Environmental Impact Statement is the last step in the planning process before the document is finalized prior to implementation. Comments from all interested parties are requested to assure that the final plan will address issues and preferences from a wide range of interests. Changes can still be made at the draft stage and it is most important to make them now. Four alternatives for future management and use of the park are presented and analyzed. The alternatives presented are: maintaining the existing management direction; emphasizing and interpreting cultural heritage while maintaining the natural and cultural resources; focusing on preservation of the natural and cultural resources; and placing a strong emphasis on education and interpretation through use of recreational activities. The impacts of each of these approaches are analyzed and the environmental considerations are discussed in the attached Environmental Impact Statement section. Comments may be made in writing to the Superintendent or orally at any of the public meetings scheduled.



Public Meetings are planned for:

Tuesday March 4, 2003 at the Dumas Public Library, Dumas, AR

Thursday, March 6, 2003 at the First Electric Community Room in Stuttgart, AR

Tuesday, March 11, 2003 at the PCC-UA Community Room in DeWitt, AR.

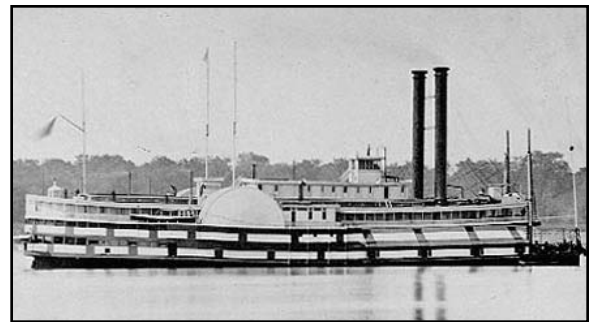
All meetings are scheduled to begin at 7:00 PM

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## 140th anniversary of the Battle of Arkansas Post observed

On Saturday, January 11, the park held a series of programs and activities commemorating the 140th anniversary of the Battle of Arkansas Post. Nearly eighty visitors braved the blustery weather to hear Frank Arey of the Department of Arkansas Heritage place the battle in the context of the Vicksburg campaign and the Civil War in Arkansas. A capacity crowd of thirty children, mostly Cub Scouts, participated in the Civil War flag activity. Former Arkansas Post Park Ranger Brian McCutchen led a tour to different points within the park significant to the battle. Considering the time of year and the weather, it was a successful event. Now we only have ten years to plan for the 150th anniversary!



The USS Black Hawk served as Admiral Porter's flagship during the battle.



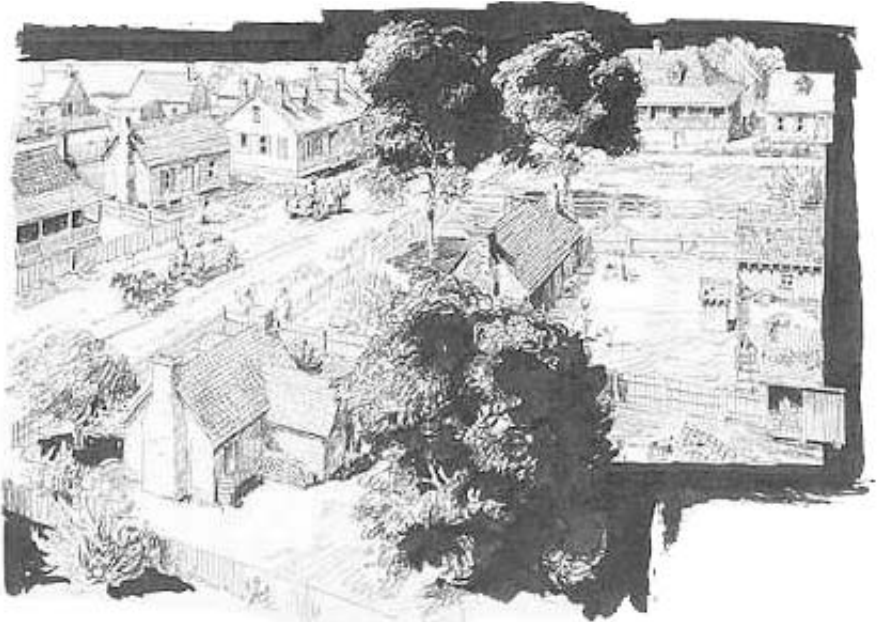
L to R: Brian McCutchen explaining the action along the Confederate defense line; Frank Arey discussing the significance of the battle; Park Volunteer Debbie Bowling and Park Ranger Eric Leonard survey the progress of the children's flag making activity.

# People of the Post: Mary John

## Slave, Cook and Tavern-Keeper

*The history of Arkansas Post is full of notable characters that are not only important to that of the lower Arkansas and Mississippi River Valleys, but to both Arkansas and American history as a whole. In each issue, it is our desire to present a brief sketch of an individual who, in some way, had a profound association with or impact on the historic Post of Arkansas.*

While the community of Arkansas Post was in a steady state of decline by the 1840s & 50s, the settlement did have one prominent attraction that caused travelers on the Arkansas River stop and stay for a while. While Montgomery's Tavern was just a memory by that time, the tavern establishment run by former slave Mary John was considered to have a reputation for the best food in the state. Numerous accounts and history books mention the "splendid" quality of her meals, one going so far as to say "Mary John kept here the only hotel or public house in the county, the most celebrated in the State for the perfection of its cuisine."



Born Marie Jeanne in the 1780s, her name was anglicized in the early 1800s by American record keepers to Mary John. Most of the information known about Mary John comes from the bills of sale in which she was passed from owner to owner:

"In the year of our Lord 1806, on July 30, toward four o'clock in the afternoon MARIE LANGUEDOC did appear before me, a Notary Public of Arkansas. Under her mark she did sell and relinquish from her possession now and forever to Mr. JEAN LARQUIER a creole negress named MARIE JEANNE about twenty years of age for the price and sum of eight hundred piasters.

"MARIE LANGUEDOC, the Widow JARDELAS, is known and declared to receive full authority by means of which she does transfer and relinquish all rights and claims whatsoever to the said negress MARIE JEANNE in favor of Mr. LARQUIER. He alone is to possess fully in the future this negress as a legitimately acquired property, in witness of which MARIE LANGUEDOC does affix her common mark before witnesses whose signatures follow with mine on this day, month and year which begin the thirty-first year of the Independence of the United States.

Witnesses:

/S/ JAS SCULL DAVID GRAY

/S/ X MARIE LANGUEDOC

Widow Jardelas

Sold to James Scull in 1811, Mary began to gain renown as a cook; Pine Bluff resident Judge J.W. Bocage, in describing an 1840 fourth of July celebration, noted, "An immense barbacue was prepared.... MARY JOHN, the memory of whose splendid dinners at the Post of Arkansas, will never be forgotten by the few survivors of her day, was on the grounds, superintending..."

Mary bought her freedom in September 1840. That same month she went into business as a tavern-keeper at Arkansas Post. She remained in business until her death in May of 1857.

While few details are known about her life, Mary John made a lasting impression on those who visited her tavern here, and her success at Arkansas Post is another example of how truly a diverse community thrived here.

### ***For further reading:***

- Core, Dorothy J. "Mary John, A Remarkable Woman of Arkansas." *Grand Prairie Historical Society Bulletin*, October 1978, Pages 16-19.
- Halliburton, W.H. *A Topographical Description and History of Arkansas County, Arkansas from 1541 to 1875*. Self Published, Circa 1910.

# The Post Trader: News and Information about the Park Bookstore

## Ranger Recommendation An Inquiry into the Locations and Characteristics of Jacob Bright's Trading House and William Montgomery's Tavern. By Patrick Martin.

Originally published in 1977, An Inquiry into the Locations and Characteristics of Jacob Bright's Trading House and William Montgomery's Tavern summarizes the results of the 1971 archeological work at the site of Montgomery's Tavern at Arkansas Post.

The focus of the dig was a portion of the same block of the townsite on which the State Bank was located. While Montgomery's Tavern is the most famous of the structures to



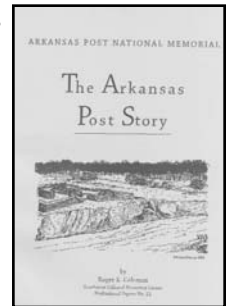
stand at this site, from 1804 to 1808 a trading post run by Jacob Bright operated there. The Tavern stood at the site from 1819 to 1821, during which time it served as the meeting place for the territorial legislature and housed such notables as John James Audubon.

These two businesses provide a fascinating window into the economic and social life of Arkansas Post in the years immediately following the Louisiana Purchase. The report is an excellent resource on the material culture of one of Arkansas Posts' most important archeological sites.



## The Arkansas Post Story returns

After being out of print and unavailable for over a year, Roger Coleman's survey of the history of Arkansas Post, *The Arkansas Post Story*, has been reprinted by Eastern National. The only book that provides an overview of Arkansas Post from its founding in 1686 through its preservation in the last century, *The Arkansas Post Story* serves as a valuable quick reference tool, and has been a popular item. This new printing of the book has a cost of only \$7.95.



For further information on Eastern National or the Arkansas Post National Memorial Bookstore you can visit [www.eParks.com](http://www.eParks.com) or contact the park at (870) 548-2207

## Arkansas Post Wants You!

Volunteering is an American tradition that over the years has made an immeasurable contribution to communities, organizations and individuals throughout the country. Today's volunteers are active, dynamic, creative individuals of all ages who possess the skills, desire, patience and time to accomplish a wide variety of tasks.

At Arkansas Post, volunteer opportunities are unlimited, and vary depending on the interests of perspective volunteers. Events such as Ghosts of the Past and smaller programs such as the 140th anniversary of the Battle of Arkansas Post would not be successful without the assistance of volunteers.

Volunteers are accepted from the public without regard to race, creed, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability. For more information about volunteering at Arkansas Post National Memorial, contact the Volunteer Coordinator, by phone at 870-548-2207 or by writing to Arkansas Post National Memorial; Attn: VIP Coordinator, 1741 Old Post Road, Gillett, Arkansas 72055



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Arkansas Post National Memorial commemorates the earliest European settlement in the Lower Mississippi valley. First established in 1686, the Post was an important staging point for Mississippi River trade between New France and the Gulf of Mexico. Situated along the Arkansas River, the small settlement here blossomed into the first capital of the Arkansas Territory.

### Arkansas Post National Memorial

1741 Old Post Road  
Gillett, AR 72055

### Phone

870 548-2207

### E-mail

[arpo\\_historian@nps.gov](mailto:arpo_historian@nps.gov)

### Internet

<http://www.nps.gov/arpo/>

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Arkansas Post National Memorial  
1741 Old Post Road  
Gillett, AR 72055

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

## Upcoming programs and events at Arkansas Post NMem.

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|----------------------|---|
| February 22-23, 2003 | Colonial Arkansas Encampment  |
| March 1-31, 2003     | Archeology Month Exhibit<br>"The Archeology of Bright's Trading House & Montgomery's Tavern"  |
| March 8, 2003        | Archeology Month Programs<br>2:00 p.m. – Program: The Arkansas fur trade factory, 1805-1810.<br>3:30 p.m. – Children's Fur Trade activity. Space is limited to 25; therefore reservations are required and may be made by calling the park at 870-548-2207. |
| April 5, 2003        | Premiere of "Echoes of the Past" park film  |

The Arkansas Post Visitor Center is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. except Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Years Day. Park information, exhibits, park film and educational sales items are available.

Arkansas Post National Memorial grounds including the picnic area are open from 7:00 a.m. to dusk every day.

